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THE PROSPECTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."—Daniel, 7 : 13, 14.

It is not my present purpose to examine, nor even to introduce those Scriptures which predict the millennial reign of Christ. Of these, let the text suffice. My object is rather to show, from actual events passed and passing, that there are unequivocal indications of a rapidly advancing period, when Christ will reign over all the world, in a kingdom of righteousness which will not pass away.

The vast and seemingly insurmountable obstacles to be overcome in securing the universal reign of Christ, are often very trying to faith; but what is most of all disheartening to the christian philanthropist, is the fact that the nations which first and subsequently received christianity, have since degenerated into the darkness and corruptions of heathenism—giving rise to the appalling suspicion, that what we are now doing will in like manner be undone; that all impressions made by christianity are, like those made upon the sands of the sea shore, to be effaced by the successive waves of a few generations; and that every attempt to establish a universal and permanent reign of christianity over the world, must be as abortive as an attempt to alter the

course of nature itself, which has ever indicated rise and fall, revolution and change, as pertaining to the law of all human events.

But careful attention to the subject, with a cautious judgment, may relieve our minds of this painful prognostic. It should be considered that the christian religion never perished from the souls that actually received it. Having cheered them through life, it received them at death to everlasting glory. But the means of transmitting and perpetuating it, now so richly enjoyed and increasing, were in the earlier ages mostly wanting. The channels through which such a religion as christianity are to be made to descend from generation to generation, are general knowledge, arts and sciences, literature, civil government, domestic institutions, and the respect and sympathy of a people for the views and institutions of their fathers.

Since the advent of Christ, there have been four general and special efforts to extend his religion over the world—the first in the time of the Apostles, the second in the time of Constantine, the third in the time of the Reformers, the fourth in our own time. But the nature and circumstances of the first three efforts were essentially different from those which characterize the last and present one.

Look first at the apostolic age. A few men were very learned in their way, but the great mass of the people were in extreme ignorance; nor were there any favorable means of diffusing knowledge among them. There was no press to multiply books;—the price of a Bible was a fortune. Few were taught to read, and fewer still could afford to own a book. The general intelligence of the people being very meager, their knowledge of religion must have been that of mere babes. How then could christianity become deeply and vitally incorporated with the minds and institutions of the age? How could any other impression of it be made upon them, than such as two or three passing generations could easily efface? Traditions would remain, but, considering the tendencies of depraved minds to corrupt truth, how soon would they naturally run into all the vagaries of heathenism? Most of the modern arts were then unknown, and science, as then taught, was almost wholly false. Natural philosophy, intellectual and moral philosophy, geography, astronomy, anatomy, and physiology, which christianity has now extensively pervaded and consecrated to Christ, were then in such a state that no true religion could safely incorporate with them. Had christianity embraced science as it was in apostolic times, she must have become so allied to falsehood as to have defeated herself. The talents and learning of the age were of course affianced to the science of the age, and this was so repugnant to christianity, that he who would embrace the one must renounce

the other. Hence the most learned apostle instructs a young disciple to "*avoid profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith.*"

The literature of the apostolic age was also lost to christianity. Greece had already passed her zenith, and Rome was then in her highest literary glory. It was not for the most erudite and polished minds of the proudest and most learned of our schools to abandon their long-cherished associations in a day, and grace their gilded pages with thoughts and imagery borrowed from the fishermen of Galilee. Before a new religion can become incorporated with the literature of a great and learned nation, it must hold dominion over the public mind long enough to mould it, and long enough for the distinguished scholars to adopt and publish and sing it. But as christianity failed to secure a hold upon the public mind long enough for this to be done, the literature of the two most learned and elegant schools the world ever furnished, with all its beauty, and eloquence, and fascination, and power, was left to give laws to the literary world for succeeding ages, without the least degree of christian sanctification, or scarcely even a single allusion to the facts and sentiments of the Gospel.

For a similar reason christianity failed to enter into the constitution of civil government. This too is the work of time, nor can it indeed ever be accomplished in kingly and aristocratic governments, but by the favor of such as do homage to literature, science, taste, and public sentiment. The time is predicted when kings will be nursing fathers to the church, but it was far otherwise in the first age of christianity. Not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

Domestic institutions, and the attachments of the people to ancestral views and customs, so powerful to retain long cherished religion, are equally powerful to resist a new one. These were but very partially changed by christianity of the first age, so short and limited was its operation.

Thus we see, that while christianity in the hands of the apostles did undoubtedly regenerate multitudes of souls and conduct them to heaven, its impressions upon the constitution of society, and all those causes which are most permanent in human affairs, were slight and transient. It is not strange that they vanished away. That primitive christianity *might have* retained and augmented its power over the earth till this hour, had the world been less wicked, or christians more faithful, is not denied. But taking men and things as they are, it was not to be expected. Every sound and far-reaching judgment would have anticipated a reverse. The apostles well knew and predicted it. While with

burning spirits and tireless hands they labored to build up the Redeemer's kingdom, they yet knew and taught that there was to be a great falling away—that the man of sin was to be revealed—and that the glory of Jesus was to immerge into a deep and prolonged eclipse, before it would burst forth in the full-orbed and everlasting brightness of millennial day. Most of the disadvantages which attended christianity under the apostles, attended it also under Constantine. Moreover, the efforts of that emperor in favor of christianity were of a worldly nature, and contemplated a worldly end. The pure light of the Gospel having mostly faded out from the nations, and science, literature, civil government, and established prejudices being strongly set against it, the united dominions of mohammedanism, popery, and paganism secured large ascendancy, under which the multitudes of the people long sat in rayless darkness. At first view, the christian religion seems to have made little or no progress during that dreary night which preceded the reformation.

The reformation under Luther and his coadjutors, glorious as it was, was yet more a political than a religious event. It was rather a *preparing of the way* of the Lord, than a work of experimental religion in the hearts of men. The impression that a large portion of the people of the revolutionized states were spiritually born of God, and that religion has since *declined* there, is a false impression. A few individuals were truly enlightened and spiritually renewed, but, with the great mass of the people, the reformation was little else than the putting off of one form of religion for another, from merely political motives, and with little knowledge of the difference.

It seems to be a law of the universe, that while those physical causes which desolate and destroy may accomplish their work suddenly, healing moral causes operate gradually. Hence the Gospel is compared to leaven hid in three measures of meal, which by degrees leavens the whole lump; and to the mustard seed, which by a slow and sure process becomes "the greatest among herbs." An earthquake may rend the earth and desolate a continent in a moment. An Alexander or a Buonaparte may demolish thrones, sweep away the landmarks of nations, and revolutionize kingdoms in a few months. But to recover the world from the bondage of Satan to the spiritual reign of Christ, is the laborious work of ages. Let us then briefly notice the progress of christianity, and observe her sure and stately march, even through external defeats and reverses, towards her predicted universal dominion.

In her first centuries she suffered more from the condition of the arts, science, literature, and domestic institutions, than from the hand of persecution. Under Constantine she suffered also

from the caresses of the world. She became secularized, and lost her power over the conscience. Mental torpor and moral death naturally followed, and a long dark night settled down upon the nations. Avarice and lust of power and indulgence ascended the ecclesiastical throne, and the papal hierarchy held in iron bondage the intellect, the conscience, the wealth, of nearly the whole civilized world. But the day of redemption at length came, and God raised up a constellation of minds adequate to the exigency. From the dusty archives of a monastery Luther recovered the long-lost word of God, and by unfolding its contents produced a convulsion that shook the papal throne to its base. Immediately thereupon mind awoke, as if kindled by fires from heaven. A new order of intellect sprang into being. But even the dark ages, commencing with the fall of Rome and terminating with the fall of Constantinople—a period of a thousand years, in which intellect, genius, enterprise, courage, refinement, and all correct moral sentiments and philanthropy, seem to have nearly forsaken the earth, and the angel of the covenant to have been about to take his everlasting flight—are imprinted with the footsteps of a benign providence, tending towards the ultimate and triumphant reign of truth and righteousness. Causes latent but effective were operating to usher in a new and splendid era. And when the set time was fully come, minds of every mould were cast by God, as brilliant and powerful as ever honored humanity, to introduce the present and approaching ages of intellectual and moral illumination. Already has christianity fought her battles with infidelity in its greatest strength, and in her own greatest weakness. Her progress is now steadily and surely onward. Whatever she gains, she retains.

Glance we now for a moment at some of the causes which, since the resurrection of the world from the dark ages, have been coming rapidly into existence to aid the progress and power of the Gospel over the human race. The invention of paper, of printing, of the telescope, of the mariner's compass, and the discovery of the sphericity of the earth, are revolutionizing the whole world and placing it in a position favorable to the light of heaven. They are opening new kingdoms of intellectual wealth, and bringing all the minds of the human family together. Every man upon the earth is becoming near neighbor to every other man. Christianity may hence indefinitely augment and universally extend her instruments of moral power. Once an important thought conceived in the closet could find its way only to a very few minds, by written manuscripts and tardy conveyances; now, by means of the press and modern facilities for traveling, it may rapidly multiply itself—one may become a million in a day—and fly as on the wings of lightning to all the families of the globe. If christianity is divine, we should expect that all advances in sound science would tend to confirm and extend it. Mohammedanism, paganism, and every species of false religion, flee in disgrace from the presence of true science. But Chris-

tianity invokes it. The religion of the Bible was disclosed in the infancy of the world, and of course in the infancy of science, and yet all the subsequent extensive researches of science have not been able to detect in it a single false promise or doctrine. The sciences of mineralogy, geology, natural history, chymistry, and astronomy, as learned by inductive demonstration, have silenced the arguments of infidels from these sciences incorrectly taught, and have proved incontestibly that the God of nature and the God of christianity are the same God. Infidelity has heretofore climbed into the heavens and dug into the earth, to seek for arguments; she has attempted to make the stars above and the storms beneath testify against Moses and against Christ. She has also, with the same intent, searched the dark and musty rolls of antiquity, and enjoyed her ephemeral triumph. Subsequent science and research are speaking more and more harmoniously with the language of the Bible. Improvements in modes of investigating moral subjects, and of communicating thought, are also contributing to extend the christian religion. The sure inductive process of arriving at truth is becoming universal; the laws and powers of the human mind are becoming better understood; the meaning of the Gospel and its adaptation to the wants of men are increasingly apparent; the nature and principles of righteous moral government are more fully disclosing their light and strength; a deeper, more rational, and more operative conviction of the truth and value of the Bible, are the result.

The tendencies of civil government to the popular and elective form are conspiring to the same end. The decree has gone forth, *The nations must be free!* The light of liberty is breaking in upon them, and no human powers can quench the glorious orb that is ascending the heavens. The intellectual and moral energies of all classes are thus elicited, and the friends of Christ the better enabled to do for his cause whatsoever their hand findeth. The progress of peace is also to be considered in the same connection. The modern invention of gun-powder, in connection with other improvements in the science and arts of war, are tending to advance christianity by banishing wars from the earth. For just in the degree that you reduce a game of hazard to certainty, you spoil the game. War is the game of madmen, played at the price of the blood of nations; and it is the uncertainty attending the game that supports it. Remove this, by enabling contending parties to calculate their relative forces, and predict the results of action, and you rob victories of their glory, military prowess of its valor, and war of its intoxicating charm. Under the combined influence of science, arts, and christianity, the world is ceasing to be swayed by brute force; the sceptre is passing over from the empire of matter to that of mind. The thunder of war and the groans of slaughtered millions will soon cease to settle disputes between nations. The sword will drop from the hand of the warrior; mind and moral worth will as-

cend the throne of power. That little instrument, *the pen*, will govern the world. "*In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.*"

So much for providential preparation. Advance now and see what *christianity has actually achieved*. Having been so miserably represented, the reformation was a resurrection of mind to oppose as well as to favor. Some of her adversaries, such especially as Herbert, Hume, Shaftsbury, Bollingbroke, Voltaire, and Rousseau, were men of extensive learning, keen pointed wit, and vigorous understandings. They pushed their researches and speculations to the farthest. The more recent productions of Pain, Volney, Taylor, and others, can have no influence but with minds of the lower order. When men must needs resort to scurrility and appeals to wicked passions to sustain their cause, it is evident that both they and their cause are fast sinking. The attacks of the learned infidels of the last century summoned the intellect of christendom to its most vigorous efforts. A galaxy of the keenest, profoundest, most learned and brilliant minds ever given to our world, instantly appeared. Every infidel position was thoroughly examined and overthrown, every infidel argument completely answered, and the truth of christianity incontestably demonstrated. When infidelity had fastened its deadly grasp on the French nation, and had begun also to invade the island of Britain; when it was essaying to walk with haughty and desolating strides across continental Europe and America; then it was that Voltaire, waxing bold in the pride of his spirit, proclaimed, "Jesus of Nazareth pretended that with twelve apostles he could establish a religion for the world and for ever, but I will let him know that I can demolish it in an age." And how well did he sustain his promise? In less than twenty years from the time he uttered it, he expired in the horrors of awakened remorse; the nation that embraced his infidelity was engulfed in ruin; a mighty earthquake shook the world, and the powers of darkness fell prostrate; extensive revivals of religion commenced in both continents; jubilee was proclaimed in Christendom, and ten thousand voices shouted, "*Hosannah to the Son of David!*" Well might the prophet in blest vision exclaim, "*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.*" When his set time to favor Zion is come, all opposition is but as a pebble before the ponderous wheels of his majestic chariot. In the order of nature, an intellectual struggle, by which error is defeated and truth established, precedes a work of experimental piety. The great intellectual battles of christianity having been successfully fought, the career of spiritual religion has been steadily advancing to this hour. All Europe is beginning to feel the holy leaven. In France, where forty years ago there were scarcely half a dozen protestant churches, there are now more

than two hundred scattered over the kingdom in every direction. Switzerland is experiencing newness of life in all her cantons. Italy has recently received several protestant ministers, and the cause of Christ is there assuming a new character and promise. Germany is imbibing evangelical sentiments by a slow but sure process. Belgium is enjoying the ministrations of some of the most faithful and enlightened servants of Christ. Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Prussia are becoming evangelical; and the great empire of Russia is beginning to receive the Gospel. In the mean-time Britain and the United States, the great depositaries and fountains of christian influence, are experiencing repeated and increasing refreshings from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. In connection with all this, contemplate the Bible, Tract, and Education Societies, Sabbath-schools, domestic missions, and the great and crowning cause of missions to the unevangelized, springing into being almost simultaneously in every christian country and denomination, sustained by the sympathies, prayers, and contributions of all who love Christ, and contemplating nothing less than the conversion of the whole world to God. Is this an idle dream of enthusiasts? To say nothing of what has been accomplished by the Danes in India, and by the Moravians and other denominations in Greenland, Africa, and America, let us see what has been accomplished in our own day and under our own eyes. An army of a thousand ordained missionaries, besides a corresponding number of females, has been educated, disciplined, equipped, and sent forth to all parts of the world—to West Africa, South Africa, the regions adjacent to the Inland Seas, China, Burmah, or India beyond the Ganges, the Indian Archipelago, Australasia and Polynesia, West Indies, the North American Indians, Greenland, and Labrador. Unaided by royal or state patronage, this host of the Lord has been sent forth and is sustained in service, with all their expensive means and instruments of labor, by the voluntary offerings of the christian public. Does not this prove that the heart and the hand of christendom are moved for the regeneration of the world? And now ask we for the *fruits*? There have been already more than a hundred thousand hopeful conversions, or more than a hundred to an ordained missionary. This, however, is but the beginning. To estimate the entire fruit of missionary labors, we must look at the numerous and strange tongues reduced to written languages, the numerous languages into which the Bible has been translated, the thousands of schools and hundreds of thousands of heathen children under christian instruction, the many valuable books of science translated and beginning to enlighten pagan mind, the millions of Bibles and of tracts circulated, and the deep and sure foundations laid for permanent christian and civil institutions.

In great masses incipient movements are gradual; hence in the larger nations the fruits of missions are as yet scarcely apparent. If you would see their more full development, cast your eye over

the Sandwich and South Sea Islands. But a few years since the darkest heathenism held entire dominion over them. They had no written language, not even the simplest elements of education. They were enslaved to the most besotting superstitions and disgusting vices. Already have their barbarous tongues been reduced to written languages, into which the Bible and other valuable books have been translated; schools of elementary instruction have been extensively established, and all classes and ages taught to read; idolatry has been renounced; the Sabbath sanctified; multitudes of souls converted; churches organized; temples of christian worship erected; the Gospel preached to large and attentive audiences; and if they have not yet attained to all the refined embellishments of older countries, they have already taken no mean place among civilized and christian nations. If we turn to Ceylon, we find some sixty thousand children under a course of christian education; a higher school or college in successful operation; repeated revivals of religion; churches planted and prospering; nothing wanting but increased and prolonged efforts. On the continent of Asia, in the populous regions of the Mediterranean, in Southern Africa, in the West Indies, in the savage portions of North America, the same operations are in various stages of progress. The sun in his daily walks shines at no moment but on some missionary station. Already does the light of the Gospel, by missionary labors, constitute an unbroken luminous zone, belting the entire globe. And this, be it remembered, by our own generation. But the beginning of a great and good reform must be comparatively slow. It accelerates its movement as it advances. Who then can reasonably doubt, that, if the causes for evangelizing the world shall go on increasing in the ratio of the last forty years, the time is at hand when the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour will be received and honored among all the nations and tribes of the earth. The struggle must be proportionably arduous, the toil severe, the sacrifice great, but the result is sure. The vision of the burning prophet, as beautifully paraphrased by Cowper, will be realized:

One song employs all nations, and all cry,
 Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!
 The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
 Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
 From distant mountains catch the flying joy;
 Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
 Earth rolls the rapturous hosannah round.

We come now to the last and most interesting inquiry, what assurance have we that the nations evangelized by modern missions will not, as in the first centuries, decline again into heathenism? Even many christians have supposed that they will; and not a few learned commentators have adopted an exposition of the prophecies, which gives to Satan yet a thousand years of dark dominion, after all nations shall have been won to Christ. But other commentators maintain that the thousand years of Satan's dominion is

already past, and the appalling conjecture that all which is now built up is to be again destroyed, is giving place to more rational and cheering prospects. But it is not my present purpose to expound the Scriptures. I shall appeal only to *facts* as evidence that what is now gained to Christ will never be lost. And here we shall find that the same reasons which we have for believing that Great Britain and the United States will never become heathen nor Mohammedan nations, we have also for believing that the nations now in the process of evangelization will never relapse to their previous state. The same means which we have already considered as favorable to *extend* christianity, are equally effectual to *perpetuate* it. Let us briefly recur to them in this connection.

In the first place, christianity will retain her hold upon the nations now and hereafter evangelized, through the *prevalence of religious knowledge among the people*. In the early ages of christianity, when there was no press, when the people were without books, and without means of instruction but by oral communication, if corruptions entered the schools and infected the teachers, there were no means of arresting them. That great conservative power, *the knowledge of the people*, was wanting. But now the press, in the hands of the missionaries, is diffusing religious knowledge among all classes. The Bible is placed in the hands of all, and they are taught to read it. The people of every rank and condition are thus introduced directly to the source of truth. And hence, if any theological schools or public teachers should ever rudely forsake the truth, and cherish views tending to heathenism, the sentiment of the great people, constantly enlightened by their contact with the Bible, will reject them and substitute others. Let any college or theological school in this country or in Britain adopt sentiments grossly at variance with the Bible, and it must soon pay the forfeiture of losing public confidence, and sinking into annihilation. The same will be the case in every nation that becomes thoroughly enlightened with the word of God.

Secondly, *The prevalence of the arts and sciences* will also contribute to perpetuate christianity. All those arts which elevate, dignify, and refine humanity, and all those sciences which impart correct and enlarged views of the laws and operations of nature, follow in the bright track of christian missions. Would it ever be possible to induce the people of Britain, or of the United States, to throw away the arts of civilized life, and return to the savage and heathen state of their early ancestors? Or would it be possible, in the nation where Newton has demonstrated the laws and movements of the heavenly bodies, and where thousands of minds are thoroughly taught the sciences of nature, and where all have proved their truth with their own eyes, and have learned to act upon them, ever to induce the people to reject the only religion which harmonizes with them, and to em-

brace one at variance with them? Men may be induced to do very strange and foolish things, but never such a thing as this. The New England farmer consults his Almanac, a little book in every family, almost as surely as the Bible, and he finds that science has predicted the day, the hour, the minute, the second of a solar eclipse, and at the predicted time his own eyes verify the calculation. He thus knows of a certainty that the science must be true. Can he then ever be induced to embrace a religion which declares this science to be false? Will he ever give credence to the absurd doctrines and blind superstitions of the heathen respecting this phenomenon? Never; nor his children, nor his children's children, to the end of time. The same is true respecting *all* the inductive and exact sciences. They all make irreconcilable war with every other religion but christianity. Wherever these prevail, all other religions but the christian must fall: this, and this only, can and must stand. And yet all these sciences are now in the progress of being taught to the heathen nations.

Thirdly, christianity will perpetuate her dominion by means of her *sanctified literature*. When a religion has become incorporated with the standing literature of a nation, even if it be a false religion, it is the work of ages to exterminate it. Indeed nothing but the most invincible demonstration of its falsity, or the destruction of the nation itself, will ever displace it from the associations and sympathies of the people. Now, English literature has already become deeply imbued with the christian religion. It has its Miltons, its Youngs, its Cowpers, its Newtons, its Wattses, its Thompsons, its Pollacks, and its hundreds of other poets of the dead and the living, to sing the sweet and sublime raptures of christianity in immortal verse. It has also its numerous prose writers of the highest order, who have set forth the doctrines and precepts of christianity with all the fascination and power and permanency of the most finished and charming rhetoric. So long as the English language endures, and there lives in Britain and America a generation to appreciate the beauties of literature, the christian religion must, in these nations, be read, and taught, and sung. Will the day ever shine when a professed scholar of English descent will not blush to own that he never read Milton nor Cowper? Consider now that modern missions are fast introducing christian literature among the heathen, and that the earliest and strongest associations of the newly evangelized nations are to be with a literature purely christian. This will be true of all excepting some in the East, who are conversant with an ancient pagan literature. With such science must go in advance of literature, to demonstrate the absurdities of their religion; then will their first associations with scientific truth and christianity be also with the literature of christianity; and it may be reasonably presumed that their con-

tempt of their former literature will be in proportion to the absurdities and vices to which it is allied. One thing is certain, of all literature repugnant to the christian religion the death warrant is already written. Its doom is sealed. He who would write for immortality must keep clear of infidelity; he must beware how he even so much as *occasionally* dips his pen in Satan's ink-horn. Correct sentiment and a chastened public taste will not tolerate it. Voltaire and Byron were splendid intellects richly furnished, and there is but one reason why they are not at this moment in every gentleman's family library by the side of Addison and Milton. As the world advances in the lofty principles and pure virtues of christianity, all infidel writings will fall more and more into neglect, until they at last pass into utter oblivion.

Fourthly, christianity will also make *institutions of civil government* subservient to the perpetuity of her dominion. I speak not of that forced alliance of church and state, by which the one is compelled to support the other. This is never to be desired. I refer only to a recognition of the truths of religion by civil governments, as the foundation of their laws and sanctions. As fast as the rude nations become christianized, civil governments are established over them upon christian principles. This has already been done in the Sandwich and South Sea Islands. By introducing into pagan nations its recognitions of human right, and its principles of human accountability, as the true support and sanction of governments, christianity ultimately becomes the foundation, and by degrees enters into the entire structure of all civil institutions. When it has thus taken root at the bottom of a nation, and shot its branches upward through all the departments of the social system, it can be removed only by the destruction of the nation itself. Every discerning politician well knows that christianity could not be severed from the civil institutions of Britain, or of the United States, but by the utter demolition of the government of which it is the support.

Fifthly, *the domestic constitution* is another important means by which the dominion of christianity will be made perpetual. The blessings of the conjugal, parental, filial, and fraternal relations, as instituted and sustained by christianity, are to all who enjoy them of so superior and absorbing interest, that if there were nothing else to bind the people of a christian nation to their religion, these would seem to be sufficient. Now as fast as christianity is introduced among the heathen, the blessings of its domestic institutions begin to be realized; hence within a single generation it is thus to become identified with all their sweetest associations and most hallowed affections. Mr. Richards, missionary from the Sandwich Islands, informed us that the aged men and women there, who had sacrificed their infant offspring

before missionaries went among them, when they looked around and beheld the happy families springing up under the institutions of christianity, burst forth with inconsolable anguish, saying to the missionaries, "Why did you not come sooner, that we too might have enjoyed the same blessings?"

Sixthly, *the deep sentiment of respect and sympathy cherished by men towards the views and institutions of their fathers*, is a very effective means of perpetuating christianity. This operates as a mighty obstacle to its *introduction* into pagan nations. Indeed nothing but the most convincing demonstration, attended with the grace of God, can avail to overcome this obstacle, even to displace a false for a true religion. But if it is mighty to resist the introduction of christianity, it will be more mighty to *retain* it when it is introduced; for in the one case it has terror, and in the other truth on its side, and other things being equal, the side of truth is always the side of prevailing strength.

Few chords are stronger than those of sympathy and affection, which bind a posterity to the religion of their ancestors. The Jews, the Mohammedans, the Chinese, and the Hindoos, all furnish striking illustrations of this truth. Sickness, trials, age, approaching death, events with which the world ever abounds, call to mind the fathers and the mothers, awaken all the tender emotions towards them, and beget strong desires to die in the same faith with them and in prospects of the same eternal inheritance. Exceptions there are, strange and monstrous creatures, who seem dead to such emotions, but they *are* exceptions. The great mass of the people, in every country, cling with desperate attachment to the religion of their ancestors. Nor was it ever known that a people, uncompelled, renounced their ancestral religion for any other excepting the christian. And never did it come to pass, in a single instance, that a christian community deliberately renounced its religion for paganism. In the early ages the posterity of christian communities gradually slid into various corruptions of christianity, through causes which now, as we have seen, no longer exist. No nation will ever consent to abandon the religion of their ancestors, unless it is proved to be false; and as this can never be proved of christianity, no nation that now enjoys or shall hereafter enjoy it, will ever renounce it. There may be eccentric individuals, wandering stars, but the great body of the people will hold to it with an unclenching grasp. The efforts of the French leaders to divorce their nation from it, although it was with them so corrupted as to be little better than paganism, were spasmodic and abortive; the people soon returned to it, and held it as tenaciously as ever. Were the rulers of this land to abjure christianity, and all the people to come under a resistless necessity to embrace atheism, or paganism, or mohammedanism, or deism, or even Romanism, for twenty years, no sooner would this term expire than they would leap from their

chains and re-embrace their religion with all the vigor of their first attachment. It is with unregenerate men as with unfilial children, who disobey and abuse their parents, but are yet unwilling to part with them.

Such are among the natural grounds of our belief that **CHRISTIANITY WILL PREVAIL OVER THE WORLD, AND BE PERPETUAL.** This ground consists of no airy speculations, or fanatical conceit, but incontestible facts and demonstrations. If the constitution and course of nature do not lie, if the known laws of the human mind do not prove false, if the power of truth and goodness to enlighten and bless does not utterly fail, there are causes in operation destined to extend and perpetuate the benign reign of Christ over all the human race. The vision of the prophet is to be fully realized—“*And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*”

The various other prophecies respecting the universal and abiding reign of Christ over the earth, as well as the promises of God to pour out his Spirit without measure, and bless all people with his renewing grace, I leave untouched. There also are sources of assurance on which the believer firmly relies, while the preceding considerations are all that remain to “the fearful and unbelieving.” However well adapted the natural means of extending and perpetuating the christian religion over the world, we doubt not that the desperate and universal depravity of our race would counteract them but for the promised grace of the Holy Spirit; yet true believers in the one being equally assured of the other, they, as well as those who are in doubt of both, are thus left to the entire force of the independent argument. To believers, therefore, as well as to unbelievers, these considerations are important, as serving to illustrate the meaning and force of prophecy, and to encourage faith. Let us thus learn to pray, to labor, to contribute, for the kingdom of Christ, with the inspiring assurance that it is certainly advancing, is near, is even upon us. Yes, the golden beams of millennial day already brighten the horizon; ours is the privilege to hasten on their noontide flood of glory. Let our hearts never faint, nor our hands grow weary. When we hear of the unexpected terminations of useful lives in the christian service, of defeats, disappointments, disasters; of the apparent triumphs of the adversary; let us not be surprised with any amazement. These are no new nor strange events. The Lord has ever overruled them for the ultimate advancement of his kingdom, and so will he ever do, till his last foe is subdued, and his undisputed reign embraces the whole world.

We are also counseled in what light to regard all the important *secular* interests and pursuits of this wonderful age in which we

live—all the sciences, arts, discoveries, inventions, all improvements in civil government and in the domestic and social state of mankind. To the cause of general education and the universal diffusion of knowledge we here assign the highest importance. All these are to be servants of Christ—they are to hasten the coming, swell the triumphs, and heighten the joys of his kingdom. The science that scales the heavens, explores the earth and seas, and searches out the deeper and richer treasures of the human mind; the arts that construct and freight our ships, make highways upon the ocean, quicken and extend commerce, course the earth in every direction with fire-spced cars, bring the human family together as it were around the same social board and the same holy altar; all the discoveries and inventions which display the gifts of nature and providence, and teach men how to use them; all possible improvements in the political, civil, and social condition of mankind—we may hail with gladness and give our hearts and hands to encourage, as means ordained by God to extend and perpetuate the dominion of Christ over the earth. Let us then expand our thoughts, take large and liberal views, do all in our power to improve the world in every particular, with singleness of eye to the glory of God, and so the sooner will Christ reign in triumph, and the more glorious and happy will be his kingdom.

And finally, we are hence furnished with some of the most stirring motives to give our heart to Christ, and enter immediately into his service. Especially to young men in a course of training for public service, and indeed to the whole rising generation, what an opportunity is afforded to “seek for glory, and honor, and immortality.” What a privilege, in a world where every thing else is so soon to perish, to have presented to your choice an object like this,—a kingdom of boundless riches and transcendent joys, so near, so certain, and never to pass away! Submit yourselves to God, become the regenerate and faithful subjects of this kingdom, and **IT IS ALL YOURS.** Its growing conquests and triumphs, its long ages of prosperous reign over the earth, the joys and praises of saints below and the redeemed above, the happiness of sympathising and gladdened angels, yea, even the infinite and amazing blessedness of God and the Lamb, are all yours to possess and to enjoy for ever! All these are to belong to the great entertainment of the marriage supper of the Lamb, when the bride hath made herself ready. Of all the redeemed and sanctified millions on earth and before the throne of God, and of all the angels of light, it shall be yours to say, “*These are my brethren; their joys are mine.*” Of Jehovah Almighty, and Christ the King of saints, you may say, “*This is my God, and all the majesty and glory of his infinite being will redound to the joy of my heart for ever.*” And inasmuch as death occasions no interruption of the vision and sympathies of disembodied spirits, what exultations may thrill your hearts, and

sweep the chords of your golden lyres, as you look down from the skies with Abraham, and Daniel, and Isaiah, and Paul, and all who have espoused the cause, and lived for the glory of Christ below, to behold the fruit of your labors, the answer of your prayers, the desire of your hearts, in the long and bright ages of millennial righteousness and joy. And then to think also of the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" reserved for you in heaven,—say, *is not all this too much to lose?* Will you consent to have no part nor lot in this great inheritance? From such a kingdom and such a portion as this, will you turn away to everlasting exile, poverty, and despair? The great price is now put in your hand, the great privilege is offered you; but if refused, will soon be withdrawn. It is the unchanging wisdom of God not to allow *such* an offer to be long trifled with. Refuse it you may, to your eternal undoing, but myriads of others will accept. The great King will say to his swift messengers, "*Go out quickly into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in; but as for those that were bidden they shall not taste of my supper.*"